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ABSTRACT

This minicourse has been designed for counselors to use with "About High School, Book 4" of the Educational Opportunities in Virginia publications. It consists of a sequential series of six 45-minute classroom guidance sessions to be conducted with seventh grade students. The course focuses on helping students, with parent involvement, to make plans for high school. The sessions are on the following topics: (1) introduction to course materials and to decision making; (2) helping students and parents understand the types of high school programs of study, diplomas, courses, and special programs; (3) focus on special programs and activities; (4) career choices and programs of study; (5) career exploration; and (6) review of major concepts and course evaluation. (TE)

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ACTIVITY GUIDE

FOR

ABOUT HIGH SCHOOL, BOOK 4

Educational Opportunities in Virginia Publications
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Activity Guide for About High School, Book 4

This minicourse has been designed for counselors to use with About High School, Book 4. It consists of a sequential series of six 45-minute classroom guidance sessions to be conducted with seventh grade students. The course focuses upon helping students, with parent involvement, to make plans for high school. In the first year of using About High School, it is advisable to conduct this course also with students in grade 8 and with their parents.

Although middle school counselors have primary responsibility for conducting the sessions of this minicourse, it is suggested that teachers be involved in co-leading many of the activities. It is advisable, therefore, for counselors to provide inservice to familiarize teachers with the contents of the booklet and activity guide and guidance techniques for conducting the activities.

Before beginning the course, it is important to inform parents and students about the availability and purposes of About High School, Book 4 and about the minicourse. Parents can be informed through parents' meetings, newsletters, and other media approaches. They should also be notified of the dates and times of the sessions in which their children will participate and invited to attend.

Counselors and teachers conducting the course are encouraged to expand upon and/or modify the activities suggested in this guide to best meet the needs of their students. Each student should have a copy of About High School and a notebook or portion of a notebook for use in course activities.

SESSION 1

Introduction to course and materials (10 minutes)

- Explain that this minicourse is being offered to help students, with the assistance of their parents, make choices and plans for high school. Tell them about the number and times of the sessions. Stress the importance of the course in helping students learn about high school programs, themselves, and careers. This knowledge is essential for making decisions about high school which will be best for them. Make it clear that students will have opportunities to make changes in their programs when they are in high school, should they desire to do so.

- Distribute the About High School booklets. Allow several minutes for the students to look through them independently. Ask for their reactions to the booklets and answer questions they may have. Tell them that it will be important for them to bring their booklets and course notebooks to each session of the course.

- Present an overview of the booklet. Start by asking the group to read "A Message to Students" on the inside of the front cover. Then discuss with them the contents of the message, focusing particularly upon the suggestions about how the booklet should be used. Explain that they will

need to get information about high school from sources other than this booklet. Tell them about any brochures or other materials you have about the high schools they will attend. Explain how these may be obtained and show some examples.

- Emphasize the importance of sharing the About High School booklets with parents and parents' role in helping their children plan for high school. Point out "A Message to Parents" on the inside of the front cover; mention that many activities in the minicourse will involve parents.

- Proceed with the overview of the booklet by using the table of contents to explain briefly the general nature of each chapter. Take some time to discuss the various kinds of post-high school education and training programs available in Virginia after they graduate (page 1). Show the group After High School, Book 5 which the students will use when they are juniors. Explain that it is designed to help them plan for their education and career after high school. Emphasize that the kind of high school program a student takes, how well the student does in that program, and the kind of diploma earned will affect the kind of education or work the student may enter after graduation. Provide some examples to illustrate this; answer questions students may have.

Class Discussion (10 minutes)

- Introduce Chapter 1, "Entering High School," by explaining that the purpose of the chapter is to help students get started in planning for high school. Highlight the topic headings.

- Ask the class to read pages 3 through 5. Explain in advance any words which may cause difficulty for some students.

- Conduct a brief discussion about going to high school and how they feel about it. Include in the discussion consideration of the following points:

  1. In choosing a high school program, it is best to select one which will allow you to pursue further education or training after high school or will prepare you for employment.

  2. Most students of their ages are not yet ready to decide upon a career.

  3. Most careers require a high school diploma and some education or training after high school.

  4. There are many kinds of financial aid programs to help with the costs of education at colleges, universities, and vocational institutions. If you want further education after high school, financial aid is available.

Making Decisions (5 minutes)

- Ask the students to remember a time when they had a difficult decision to make. How did they feel while they were trying to make their decision?
- What did they do in trying to decide? Did they seek help in deciding? From whom? How did they finally reach a decision?

- Explain that some people make choices by using methods such as flipping a coin, getting others to decide for them, or choosing what seems easiest at the time. Ask the students their opinions regarding these methods. Explain that there are definite steps to follow in making decisions which increase one's chances of making good decisions. Display a chart you have made in advance which shows the following steps for making decisions; explain and discuss each step.

  1. Identify all the possible choices.

  2. Get information about each one.

  3. Consider the probable outcomes of each choice--their advantages and disadvantages.

  4. Discard the choices which seem likely to result in undesirable outcomes.

  5. Rank the remaining choices from highest to lowest in terms of possible benefits or advantages.

  6. Look at the highest-ranked choice. Does it seem much more beneficial than those ranked below it? If so, this appears to be the most desirable choice to make.

  7. If there seems to be little difference in benefits between the two or three highest-ranked choices, go back to step 2 and begin the decision making process again.

(Leave this chart on display throughout the minicourse.)

Decision Making Exercise (20 minutes)

- Divide the group into small groups of four to six members.

- Introduce this exercise by explaining that they will have 10 minutes to work together in their groups to make a decision about a problem you will present to them. Ask for ideas about some rules to follow in the group discussions. (Limit this to three minutes.) Be sure that the following rules are included:

  - Stay on the subject.

- Take turns.
- Listen when others are speaking.
- Treat others with consideration.

- Present the following situation to the groups. List some of the key facts on the chalkboard as you present it.

> Sally is 12 years old and is in the seventh grade. During the time she has been in middle school, she has had few friends and has often felt lonely. For many months she has secretly wanted to be friendly with a group of girls who are in her class. They are very popular and always seem to Sally to be having a good time. For the most part, however, they have ignored her efforts at friendship.
>
> One Monday, the girls asked Sally if she would like to go to the movies with them on the following Friday evening. They are planning to see a film which Sally's parents have told her she may not see because it has too much violence and adult content.
>
> Sally feels very happy and flattered that the girls have asked her to go to the movies with them. At the same time, she feels upset and confused. She desperately wants to go with them, but she knows that her parents will not change their minds about her seeing this film.
>
> Then she remembers that her parents will be away on Friday and that she will be staying with her grandmother, who does not know that Sally's parents have forbidden her to see the film. In addition, her grandmother generally allows Sally to do what she wants.

- Sally has an important decision to make. What would you decide to do if you were Sally? Use the decision making steps to decide. Remember to consider all the possible choices and the advantages and disadvantages of each. What should Sally do? (Remind the group that they have 10 minutes to reach a decision.)

- Call time after 10 minutes. Ask the groups whether or not they were able to reach a decision. Have each group tell how it arrived at a decision and what the decision is.

- In conclusion, point out the similarities and differences in how the groups arrived at the decisions they made. Point out that this same decision making process can be used in making decisions about high school programs. Emphasize that students will need to find out about high school programs, about themselves, and about careers before they are ready to decide which high school programs and courses will be best for them.

Ask the Students to Complete the Following Activities Before The Next Session:

- Take the booklets home and share them with your parents. Ask your parents to read "A Message to Parents" and pages 1 through 5. Discuss the information on these pages and look through the rest of the booklet with them.

- Write in your notebooks answers to the questions on page 5. You will find that you will be able to answer some of them quite easily. You probably will have difficulty with others. In fact, you may not be able to answer some of the questions at this time. Talk with your parents and get their ideas about you and these questions.

- Over the next few weeks, talk further with your parents, other family members, your counselor, teachers, and friends to learn more about yourself. Get as much information about yourself as possible. This information will be helpful in understanding yourself better so you may choose high school programs, courses, and activities which are right for you. Record in your notebook the information you gather about yourself. Try to complete this activity by the fifth session of this course. (Announce the date of the fifth session.)

- Invite your parents to attend the next session of the minicourse.

- Be sure to bring the booklets to the next session.

SESSION 2

This session is devoted primarily to helping students and parents understand the types of high school programs of studies, diplomas, and the various courses and special programs offered in high school. Attention is also given to the importance of studying and homework to students' success in high school.

It is especially important for parents to participate in this session. It may, therefore, be advisable to hold the session in the evening rather than during the school day to accommodate parents employed during the day. It may also be advisable to have counselors from the high schools your students will attend co-lead the session with you and help answer questions.

Before beginning the session, be sure that each student and parent present has a booklet for use during the session. To ensure this, have some extra booklets on hand; these will be collected at the end of the session.

Introduction to Session (5 minutes)

- Review the purpose of the course and the times sessions will be held. Encourage parents and students to ask questions about the course, the booklet, and any information presented during this session. Stress the importance of parental involvement in helping children make decisions and plans for high school and for succeeding in high school.

- Refer to and discuss briefly the suggestions in "A Message to Parents" on the inside front cover of About High School. Make clear the availability and interest of the principal, counselors, and teachers in helping to make decisions and plans for high school.

Discussion of Educational Choices After High School (10 minutes)

- Ask the group to look at the chart, "Educational Choices After High School," page 1 of About High School. In a conversational style which encourages group interaction, point out the various types of postsecondary educational programs, the length of each, and the degrees earned. Discuss the following information:

    - Many different kinds of educational and training programs are available to students in Virginia after high school graduation.

    - It is important for parents to encourage their children to take a high school program which will prepare them to continue their education or training after high school graduation. This will provide them with various options after graduation. They should also encourage their children to do well in their high school studies.

    - Many careers require education or training after high school.

    - Financial aid is available for students in Virginia to continue their education or training after high school.

    - Parents can best help their children by encouraging them to set high, but realistic, goals for the future—to get the most education or training they can, according to their abilities and interests. Parents may wish to meet individually with their children's counselors to review pertinent information from their children's student records.

    - The kind of high school program students take and their success in those programs will largely determine the kind of education, training, or career they may enter after high school.

Presentation of High School Programs of Studies (15 minutes)

- Use the information on pages 6 and 7, along with other information you have about the programs at high schools the students will attend to discuss the following:

    - Units of credit.

- The 20-Credit Diploma, the Board of Education Seal, and the minimum requirements for this diploma. (See chart on page 6.)
- The 22-Credit (Advanced Studies) Diploma, the Governor's Seal, and the minimum requirements for this diploma. (See chart on page 7.)
- A comparison of the requirements for these diplomas. Point out the importance of a 22-Credit Diploma for entry into most four-year colleges and universities.
- Special Diplomas and Certificates and the minimum requirements for each.

Overview of High School Subjects Most Students Take (15 minutes)

- Direct the group's attention to Chapter 2, "High School Subjects."
- Introduce the concept that the subjects required for high school graduation are important preparation for education, work, and life after high school. Chapter 2 contains information to help students understand what they can learn from their various high school subjects.
- Discuss each of the subject areas on pages 9 through 13. Solicit and answer questions about each subject before proceding to the next subject.

Ask the Students to Complete the Following Activities Before The Next Session:

- Read Chapter 2. Ask your parents to read it, too. Talk with them about which high school subjects discussed in the chapter seem most interesting to you and why. Make a list of these in your notebook.
- Discuss which high school subjects seem least interesting to you and why. Make a list of these subjects in your notebook.
- Think about what you would like to accomplish in high school in terms of courses, friends, and activities. Discuss these goals with your parents.
- Write a short paragraph in your notebook about what you hope to accomplish in high school.
- Be sure to bring your notebook to the next session.
- Invite your parents to attend the next session.

SESSION 3

This session provides an opportunity for the group to learn about the special programs and activities offered in high school, as described in Chapter 3. In addition, time will be devoted to exploring students' interests in school subjects and other activities, which will provide a meaningful transition to Chapter 4, "Careers."

Overview of Special Programs and Activities in High School (5 minutes)

- Conduct a brief overview about the purposes and content of Chapter 3. Be sure to mention each topic included in the chapter.

Presentation (25 minutes)

- Specific information about special programs and activities in the high schools the students will attend can be presented in a variety of ways, according to your own creativity and existing resources. Some options are as follows:

  Option 1. Have a panel composed of appropriate faculty members and selected student leaders from the high school your students will attend. Panel members will present information about each of the topics discussed in Chapter 3 of About High School. For example, the panel might consist of the high school principal, a guidance counselor, a teacher in the gifted and talented program, the librarian, a special education teacher, and a student. Each could present information about some of the special programs and activities in their high school and also answer questions.

  Option 2. If it is not possible for the panel members to be present at the time of the group session, a videotape of their discussion could be made and shown. You would need to be prepared to answer questions following the showing of the tape.

  Option 3. Present the information yourself. Be certain to have up-to-date facts about the special programs and activities at schools your students will attend.

Small Group Discussion (10 minutes)

- Have those present form small groups of 5 or 6 members. Each group will discuss members' goals for high school and the school subjects of greatest interest, as identified through student activities assigned at end of Session 2. (Call time at the end of 10 minutes.)

- Ask the group to turn to Chapter 4. Point out the introductory information, "Find Out About Careers," page 23.

- Explain how the information in each career area in the chapter is organized and the importance of each topic area.

Ask the Students to Complete the Following Activities Before The Next Session:

- Read page 23 and look through the rest of Chapter 4. Take time to read about any of the career areas which seem attractive to you.

- Think about what you have learned about yourself and your interests. Based upon this information, choose two career areas which seem most interesting to you. Read the sections in the booklet about these career areas very carefully. Be prepared to discuss during the next session why you chose to find out more about these.

SESSION 4

The purpose of this session is to help students recognize that, although they probably are not ready to choose their careers, they must consider careers when choosing their high school programs of studies. This session is also intended to help them recognize that (1) particular kinds of education or training are necessary to pursue various careers and (2) in exploring careers, consideration must be given to one's own abilities, interests, and goals as well as to the education required for various careers. Furthermore, students will be introduced to an approach for looking at career options which focuses on workers' skills and interests, education, the importance of high school courses to specific careers, and ways of exploring careers of interest while in high school.

Orientation to Career Information Resources (10 minutes)

- Review and discuss with the group the information in "Find Out About Careers," page 23. Have on hand some of the primary sources of career information available in your school library, guidance office, career resource center, and classrooms. Also, direct the group's attention to the Virginia Vital Information for Education and Work (VIEW) System and other available computer career information programs and explain how they may be used in exploring careers. Allow time for the group to examine the career information resources on hand and to ask questions about them.

Developing Career Exploratory Plans (35 minutes)

- Explain that having a written career exploratory plan is very useful for taking an in-depth look at some career areas of interest. Such a plan should consist of actions to be taken for learning about the selected careers and the times when these actions will be carried out. (5 minutes)

- Divide the class into small teams of four or five members based upon the commonality of students' two areas of career interests, as chosen through the activities assigned at the end of Session 3. Ask the groups to develop a list of ideas for getting information about their career fields. Encourage them to be creative in this activity, and inform them that they will have 10 minutes to develop the list. Be sure that there is a person serving as a recorder for each group. (10 minutes)

- Call time at the end of the 10 minutes. Ask each recorder to read aloud the list of career exploration approaches developed in the small group activity. Post these lists in the classroom for reference by students in the following activity. (5 minutes)

- Ask the teams to develop career exploration plans for learning more during the coming week about the two career fields they have identified as being of highest interest to them. Encourage them to divide the activities specified in their plans so each team member may carry out some of the activities. (The counselor should move from group to group as the plans are being developed and to lend support and make suggestions, where necessary.) (15 minutes)

Ask the Students to Complete the Following Activities Before The Next Session:

- Carry out your part of the career exploratory plan developed by your team. Be prepared to discuss at the next session what you have learned from this activity.

- Talk with your parents about your career exploratory activities.

SESSION 5

The first part of this session is spent in discussion of what the students have learned about the career fields they have been exploring, with particular attention to their reactions to the new information they have gathered. The rest of the session is devoted to a brief review of high school programs of study and course requirements.

- Ask the students to meet in their career exploratory teams and do the following:

    - Share the new information you have gathered about the two career fields you have studied.

    - Were you surprised at anything you found out about these career fields? Are you as interested in these fields as you were previously?

    - Plan a brief presentation to be made to the larger group about the two career fields you studied. (15 minutes)

- Ask each team to report what they have learned about the career fields. (20 minutes)

- Review briefly the information about the 20- and 22-credit diplomas in Chapter 1 of the booklet, and the courses required for each. (5 minutes)

- Ask students to complete the following in view of each of the two career fields they have explored:

  - If I should decide to enter a _____ career, the kind of high school diploma I should earn is the _____. I should also be sure to take the following kinds of high school subjects, which are especially important preparation for that career:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Ask the Students to Complete the Following Activities Before The Next Session:

- Review your answers to the questions on page 5 of About High School. If possible, answer the questions which you were not able to answer previously. What have you learned about yourself? What further information about yourself do you need to find out? How and when will you accomplish this?

- Review the information in Chapter 2.

- Make a list of questions you or your parents have about the following:

  1. Diplomas and programs of studies.
  2. Required courses and electives.
  3. School subjects.
  4. Other topics discussed in the booklet or the minicourse.

SESSION 6

This session is devoted mainly to a review of the major concepts presented in the course and to an evaluation of the course.

Questions and Answers

- Answer questions students have brought about diplomas and programs of studies, required courses and electives, school subjects, and other topics. (15 to 20 minutes)

Review of Decision Making Process

Remind the group that they must learn about high school programs, about themselves, and about careers before using the decision making process to plan for high school. Review the steps for decision making, as presented during Session 1. (10 minutes)

Concluding Summary

- Bring the group's attention to "A Final Message for Students," page 30, and discuss it with them. Ask the group to look at the inside of the back cover of the booklet which can be used for planning their high school programs. (5 minutes)

- Ask the students to begin talking with their parents about the kind of diploma to select and the kinds of courses to take in grades 8 and 9. Suggest that they meet also with their counselors for additional help in choosing their high school program of studies. Encourage them to invite their parents to participate in their meetings with the counselors. Encourage them also to use the About High School booklet in their planning.

Course Evaluation

- Ask the students to write their opinions of the course, particularly whether or not it has been helpful in preparing them to begin planning for high school. Get their suggestions for improving the course, too. You may develop a questionnaire or rating scale to use for this course evaluation. Be sure to tell students they do not have to put their names on these evaluations. You should use the feedback provided by these student evaluations to improve future sessions of the minicourse.

Follow-Up

- This course is designed to lay a strong foundation for individual decision making regarding high school programs of studies as well as certain eighth-grade course selections. As a follow-up to this course, counselors will need to continue to provide opportunities for counseling with students and their parents so students may make more specific plans for high school.